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A BAMBOO MONGOOSE TRAP

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Mongoose have been taken successfully in Trinidad with an easily constructed live trap used locally for many years to catch land crabs. It is made from the common bamboo, which is widely grown in most subtropical and tropical areas. In countries where the Indian mongoose, Herpestes auropunctatus, has been introduced, it is a practical and economical method of capturing them, even for large-scale operations.

The body of a mongoose is about 14 inches long and its tail about 12 inches. Hollow internodes or "joints" of bamboo, about two feet long, with basal node diameters of about 3-1/2 inches, make ideal darkened cylinders into which the slender mongoose will readily enter and easily fit. The trap is easy to make.

Saw a two-foot section, leaving one internode to form the solid end (Figure 1). Next, carve the trigger assembly parts (Figure 2). The bow (A) which closes the trap door is about six inches long. It is slit about one inch at each end to provide a place to anchor a rubber band cut from an old inner tube. The trap door (B) is about five inches long and 3-1/2 inches wide, rounded on the bottom edge to fit the contour of the inside of the trap. The top edge is notched to hold the rubber band and a second notch is cut on the inner surface about three fourths of the way to the base so that it will be held up high enough for the mongoose to enter. The flying stick (C) is long enough to fit the notches of the trap door at one end and the trigger stick at the other. The trigger stick (D) is whittled from a half-inch by four-inch piece notched long enough to clear the thickness of the trap as well as the flying stick; both edges of the notch must be square. Bait is tied or smeared on the rounded lower half of the trigger stick. On the top side of the trap about an inch in front of the internode, cut a three-quarter inch square hole through which the trigger stick is inserted and a one-inch slot about three inches from the open end for the trap door. A slit is then cut from the rear edge to hold the bow (Figure 3). Insert the bow, rough side up, rubber band attached,



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in this slit (Figure 4). The rubber band, when inserted in the notched top of the trap door, should have ample tension to spring the door shut and hold it in place (Figure 5). Set the trap by inserting the flying stick into the trap door notch, the trigger in the trigger hole (Figure 6) and hook the rear end of the flying stick firmly under the upper edge of the trigger notch (Figure 7). When the trigger is pulled (Figure 8), the flying stick is released and the trap door drops in place.

Cut bamboo may become infested, within 24 hours after harvesting, with bamboopowder-post beetles, which are abundant in the Caribbean Islands. This may be prevented by the application of five percent DDT to the freshly cut bamboo either brushed inside and out or used as a ten-minute dip. It is preferable to use DDT wettable powder since an oil base might be repellent to the mongoose. Insecticides may not be necessary since the traps are easily made and considered expendable.

A variety of baits, such as dried fish, canned sardines, fat pork, bacon, chicken heads and entrails may be used. These may be smeared or tied on to the bait stick or, space permitting, placed free on the trap bottom as far behind the bait stick as possible. However, it should be noted that fish and meat baits rot rapidly in the tropics, attracting flies, dogs and vultures. It may be that mongooses could be attracted by means of scented lures. Although this method has not been tested, mongooses have large scent glands which could be prepared for lure, which, along with mongoose urine, might prove satisfactory and thus reduce trap molestation, at least by vultures. To prevent dogs and vultures from troubling a baited trap, experience has shown that the best sets are made when the trap is placed between logs or rocks, against trees or buildings and covered with twigs, branches, grass or sugar cane trash. This also prevents the round trap from rolling to one side, although this does not matter unless the bait stick is tripped. However, mongooses also like the cover of sugar cane fields and grasslands, where logs, wood, rocks or other suitable braces may not be handy. To prevent molestation and rolling, then, the trap may be set into a trench made with a cutlass, machete, knife or the heel of a shoe and then covered with vegetation and sugar cane trash.

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